The Topology of Presence

Four Planes of Existence on the Lemniscate

Temporality, Eternity, and the Grammar of the Serpent

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Companion to The Lemniscate of Time: A Topology Of Memory, Possibility, And Grace

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I. From Temporal Structure to Ontological Map

"I am Who I am."

— Exodus 3:14

What follows is not a systematic treatise. It is an essay born from a conversation—a sustained act of thinking aloud in which the architecture of time, as I have come to understand it through the lemniscate, was extended into its fullest ontological and theological dimensions. The four-quadrant diagram at the heart of this work is an attempt to articulate, in a single topological image, distinctions long explored across philosophical and theological traditions: temporality and eternity, visibility and invisibility, existence and non-existence, grace and displacement, the grammar of God and the grammar of the serpent. It does not resolve these tensions, but seeks to hold them within a common structure.

In my previous work—*The Lemniscate of Time: A Topology of Memory, Possibility, and Grace*—I developed the lemniscate as a figure for the structure of human temporal experience. The crossing point of the figure-eight is the Now: the site where memory and anticipation converge, where the self is singular and present, where grace acts and freedom operates. The curve itself traces the movement of temporal life—the lobe of the past, the lobe of the future, always returning to the center.

This essay advances the framework in a new direction. It maps four ontological planes onto the lemniscate—two within the temporal curve, two outside it—and in doing so, it produces a complete topology of time that encompasses not only lived experience but the conditions of eternity, evil, hell, and the Ghost Zone. The diagram crosses two axes: the visible and the invisible (horizontal), and what exists and what does not persist (vertical). The result is four quadrants, each with its own mode of being, its own relationship to the crossing point, and its own implications for the human soul.

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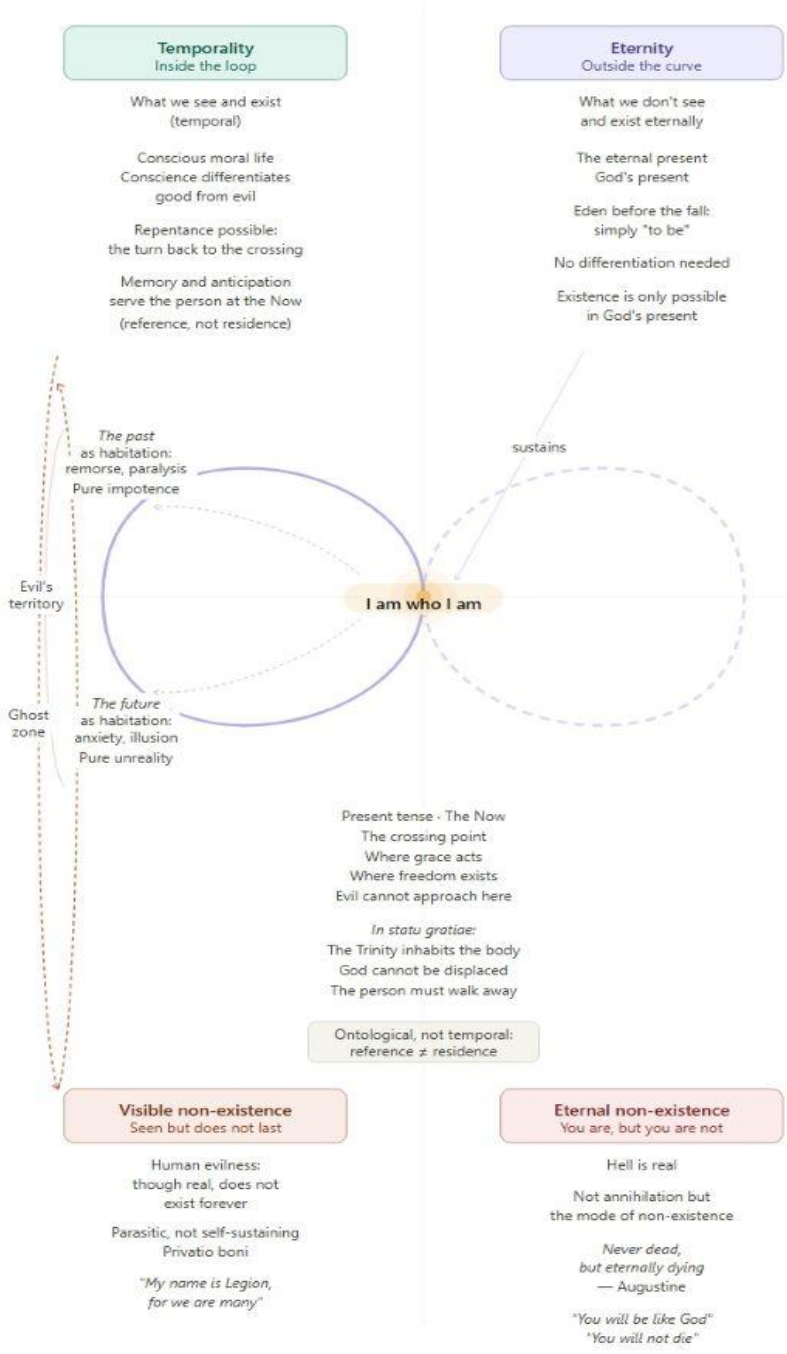
II. The Four Planes



The Gaitan Topology

Temporality: Inside the Loop

The upper-left quadrant is the domain of ordinary temporal existence—what we see and what exists within the lemniscate's curve. This is the phenomenal world as it unfolds in temporal succession: the domain of memory, anticipation, routine, work, family, moral reasoning, and conscious life. Here, conscience operates. Here, the human person differentiates good from evil—not as an abstract exercise, but as the very condition of post-lapsarian existence.

The Fall introduced temporal succession. Before the Fall, in the Edenic state, there was no need for moral differentiation because there was no evil to distinguish from good. Adam's mode of being was simply *to be*—present, in God's presence, without the weight of past or the pull of future. But after the Fall, the human person enters the curve. Memory and anticipation become the instruments of navigation. And here, critically, **repentance is possible**. The person inside the curve can turn—can reorient from the periphery back toward the crossing point. The lemniscate functions. The topology holds.

Memory and anticipation, in this quadrant, *serve* the person at the Now. "Yesterday was hot" and "tomorrow will be cold" are temporal references—innocent, human, necessary. They are tools of the temporal life, not enemies. This distinction is essential and must be understood before proceeding to what follows.

Eternity: Outside the Curve

The upper-right quadrant is what we do not see and yet exists eternally. This is the Eternal Present—God's own duration, the fullness of being that sustains the lemniscate from beyond it. Eternity is not endless time. It is a qualitatively different mode of existence that the lemniscate can gesture toward but never contain. The right lobe of the figure-eight is drawn as a dashed line: real, but invisible, outside the curve of temporal experience.

This is Eden before the Fall. This is the condition in which Adam simply *was*—without differentiation of good and evil, because no such differentiation was

needed. The knowledge of good and evil is a consequence of the Fall, a feature of life *inside* the curve. In the Eternal Present, there is only being, held in God's presence.

Existence is only possible in God's Present. This is the foundational claim of the entire topology. The Eternal Present is not merely a philosophical concept; it is the ground that holds the crossing point open. Without it, the lemniscate has no center, and without a center, the curve has no crossing, and therefore no structure at all. God's eternity does not merely coexist with the Now—it makes the Now possible.

Visible Non-Existence: What We See and Does Not Last

The lower-left quadrant is the plane of what we see but does not ultimately exist. Human evilness belongs here. It is real—experienced, suffered, witnessed—but it is without ontological permanence. Evil is parasitic, not self-sustaining. It appears within the loop of temporal life but has no ground of its own. This is the Augustinian *privatio boni*: evil as the absence of good, not as a substance in its own right.

A critical clarification is necessary here. The person in this quadrant—the lower-left, still inside the curve—**remains aware of good and evil**. Conscience still functions. Repentance is still possible. The person knows that what draws them is immoral; they recognize the distinction between right and wrong. They are not yet in the Ghost Zone. They are under a gravitational tendency—not a force that compels, but an inclination that draws them away from the crossing point. The movement is not automatic. Between the pull and the response there remains an infinitesimal gap—the micro-gap—in which agency resides.

The Ghost Zone person, by contrast, has been displaced *out of the curve entirely*. The distinction is decisive: in the lower-left quadrant, the person yields moment by moment to what is presented, but at every point the crossing remains available. The person is not deprived of it—but must enter it. In the Ghost Zone, the person

has moved so far from the center that the crossing point is no longer experientially accessible, even though it remains ontologically real.

Eternal Non-Existence: You Are, but You Are Not

The lower-right quadrant is the most radical and the most easily misunderstood. It is the plane of what we do not see and does not exist—but this must not be read as annihilation. I am not saying that hell is not real. **Hell is real.** What I am identifying is hell's *mode* of reality, which is the most terrifying kind: not the cessation of being (which would be a mercy, a final resolution), but the perpetual state of dying without ever arriving at death.

> *"Never dead, but eternally dying."*
>
> — Augustine

God's sustaining act is universal and unwithdrawable—but the *reception* of that act depends on the topology of the receiver. At the crossing point, in God's Present, the sustaining act is received as life, as grace, as being. Outside the curve, severed from the structure that would allow the person to receive it as life, the same act is experienced as torment—because it *prevents dissolution* without *granting existence*. The damned cannot die because God sustains them. They cannot live because they have no crossing point at which to receive that sustenance as life. That is the eternally dying.

Hell is not God's punishment in the active sense—it is the consequence of topology. The same sun that warms the living burns the unshielded. God does not change. The position changes.

The person in this quadrant *is*—they have not been erased—but they exist in a mode that is the negation of existence. They persist as a kind of ontological contradiction: being that cannot fully be. Outside the curve, there is no Now in which to act, no integration of self from which to turn. The capacity for repentance presupposes exactly the topological structure that has been lost. **Outside the curve, there is no opportunity of repentance**—not because God withholds

it, but because the condition for repentance (a singular self at the crossing point of real time) is no longer there.

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III. The Grammar of God and the Grammar of the Serpent

The deepest structural insight of this topology is grammatical. It concerns verb tense—and verb tense, I argue, is not a neutral feature of language but an ontological indicator of where the speaker stands in relation to the crossing point.

God introduces Himself to Moses in the present tense: ***"I am Who I am"*** (Exodus 3:14). Not "I was." Not "I will be." The divine name is pure present—the eternal Now speaking. The grammar of God is the grammar of presence, of being.

And it is not only in the divine name that this grammar appears. In the Gospel of John, Christ declares: ***"I am the resurrection and the life"*** (John 11:25). Not *will be*, not *was*—but *am*. This is a claim about presence, not sequence. Christ fully inhabits and reveals the crossing point; the intersection of eternity and temporality is not a location He merely occupies but the mode of His presence in the world. Every *I am* statement in the Gospels is, in the terms of this topology, a declaration that the Eternal Present has entered the curve and holds the center from within.

The serpent, by contrast, speaks in the future tense: ***"You will be like God"*** and ***"You will not die."*** Both promises project the person *out of the present* and into a fabricated futurity. The serpent's entire linguistic strategy is displacement from the Now. He cannot operate in the present tense because the present tense belongs to God. He can only gesture toward a *you will be*—a future where you will be like God rather than simply *being* with God.

The Fall, then, is a tense shift. Adam and Eve moved from the indicative present (*I am, in God's presence*) to the subjunctive future (*I will be, like God, on my own*

terms). From being to becoming-without-arriving. Topologically, this is leaving the crossing point and entering the curve without a center—the parasitic loop.

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IV. The Broken Promise and the Divided Allegiance

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

— John 14:6

We say we fear death. But the fear may not begin at the moment of dying. It may begin much earlier—at the moment a promise is accepted.

The serpent did not merely invite disobedience. He introduced a grammar: *you will not die*. A future secured, a becoming without limit, a self that continues. And the human person, having accepted that grammar, begins to live in it. Not always consciously. Not always explicitly. But structurally. The self becomes something projected—something not yet, something to be achieved, secured, completed.

Death, then, is not only the end of life. It is the collapse of that projection. It exposes the instability of the promise. The one who lives in *I will be* cannot accept *you will die*. And so we say we fear death. But what we resist is not only the end of biological life. We resist the loss of the future in which we have placed ourselves. We resist the interruption of deferral.

At the same time, we confess something else. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This is not a future promise. It is a present declaration. Not: *you will be*. But: ***I am***. And yet, a division appears. We confess the present tense—but we live in the future tense. We call ourselves followers of Christ, but we organize our being around a different grammar. We speak the language of *I am*, but inhabit the structure of *you will be*.

This is not a contradiction at the level of doctrine. It is a contradiction at the level of existence. The broken promise is not simply believed. It is *inhabited*. And the truth is not simply denied. It is *deferred*. The result is a divided allegiance—not between two explicit choices, but between two modes of being. One gathered in the present, where life is given. The other extended into a future that never arrives, where life is always about to begin.

The problem is not that the promise of the serpent is convincing. The problem is that it is still operative. And so long as the person lives within that grammar, death will appear not only as an end, but as a betrayal—because it interrupts a future that was never real.

The way out is not to resolve the contradiction intellectually. It is to return to the only place where no contradiction can stand: the present. ***I am.*** Grace does not meet the person in the future they imagine, but in the present they avoid.

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V. Past and Future as Moral Enemies of the Now

Before proceeding, a clarification is necessary. I am not claiming that time reduces to life or life to time. What I am proposing is that temporal succession—the experience of before and after—is the form that life takes when presence is incomplete. Sequential time is life stretched across memory and anticipation. Lived time is life gathered into the present. Eternal time is life at its fullest: undivided, simultaneous, complete. The lemniscate does not reject time. It proposes time as lived geometry—a framework in which the mode of temporal experience reveals the degree of presence the person has actually achieved. This distinction matters because what follows concerns not the ordinary use of past and future as temporal references, but their conversion into ontological residences—rival habitations that compete with the present for the person's being.

When I say that past and future are enemies of the Now, I am speaking ontologically and spiritually—not temporally. Remembering yesterday's weather or planning for tomorrow's meeting is not sinful or destructive. That is the lemniscate functioning as it should: memory and anticipation serving the person who remains anchored at the crossing point.

What I am identifying is something entirely different. **Past and future, as modes of being—as places where the self attempts to dwell—are mortal enemies of the Now.** When remorse becomes not a memory recalled at the crossing point but a *habitation*, when anxiety becomes not a prudent anticipation but a *residence*, then past and future have ceased to be temporal references and have become rival ontologies.

The distinction is between **reference** and **residence**. Memory as reference: I recall something and bring it to the Now, where I process it, learn from it, offer it to God. Memory as residence: I relocate into the past and live there, defined by what I did or what was done to me, unable to act because the past is the plane of pure impotence—nothing can be changed there. Anticipation as reference: I consider the future and plan from the Now, where I retain agency. Anticipation as residence: I relocate into the future and live there, defined by what might happen, unable to act because the future is the plane of pure unreality—nothing exists there yet.

This is the serpent's deepest trick. He does not offer an alternative *place*. He offers an alternative *tense*. "You *will be*" is not information about the future—it is an invitation to *live in* the future, to relocate the self from *I am* to *I will be*. And the moment the self accepts that relocation, it has left the only tense in which God dwells, the only tense in which grace operates.

Remorse says: *the past disqualifies you from the present*. Anxiety says: *the future threatens the present*. Both are lies spoken in the wrong tense. **Evil fights God outside the center.** There is no attempt at the crossing point because the way is shut. The only territory available to evil is the curve on either side of the Now—between remorse and anxiety. That is the killing field. Not the center. The margins.

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VI. In Statu Gratiae: Why Evil Cannot Storm the Center

When a person is in the state of grace—*in statu gratiae*—the Holy Trinity inhabits the body and shares Its grace with the soul. This is not metaphor. This is sacramental reality. And the architectural consequence is absolute: **God cannot be displaced from the center by any capital sin or demon.** Evil cannot come *to* the center. The topology does not allow it. The center holds because it is held by the Eternal Present.

What must happen instead is that **the person walks away**. The person, by free will, moves out of the crossing point and into the periphery of the curve, where they become easy prey. God does not expel. God does not withdraw. The person leaves. The parasitic loops, the algorithmic promises, the manufactured displacements—they do not attack the center. They *lure the person away from it*. The strategy of evil has never been confrontation at the center. It has always been enticement toward the edge.

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VII. The Phenomenology of Presence

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things."

— Luke 10:41

If the crossing point is where life is truly lived, then a question arises that is devastatingly personal: how often do we actually inhabit it? The answer, for most human beings, is rarely. Not because the crossing point is scarce, but because it is *missed*.

Augustine observed that the soul is "distended"—*distentio animi*—stretched across time, pulled between memory and expectation. The lemniscate gives this stretching a geometry. The intersection is always present; the curve always passes through it. But the person does not always inhabit it. Most moments—the vast majority of a human life—are traversed without being entered. They are not lost in the sense of being forgotten. They are lost in the deeper sense of never having been *lived*.

There is, however, one period of human life in which the crossing point is inhabited by default: childhood. We say that infancy and early childhood were the wonder years—happy, immediate, alive. And if the topology holds, the reason is structural. The child has no accumulated past to regret and no projected future to fear. Remorse and anxiety—the two forces that displace the adult from the Now—have not yet become available as residences. The child does not achieve presence. The child has not yet lost it. The wonder years are the phenomenological recapitulation of the Edenic condition: a life lived in present tense because no other tense has yet become habitable. The first displacement—the first wound, the first absence, the first experience that generates a past worth regretting or a future worth fearing—is the child's topological fall. From that moment, the crossing point is no longer the default. It becomes something that must be returned to. And most people never learn how, because no one taught them it was there.

Consider the texture of ordinary experience. Not every present is equal. Some moments pass uninhabited: distracted, instrumental, already aimed at the next thing before the current one has registered. Other moments are narrativized: labeled as "important" by circumstance and therefore remembered, though not necessarily inhabited with full presence. And a very few moments are fully inhabited: gathered, undivided, complete in themselves. These are the moments that carry the quality of eternity not because they last forever but because, for once, the person was truly *there*.

This reframes the common lament about the brevity of life. The problem is not that life is short. The problem is that presence is rare. **We do not run out of time. We run out of presence.**

The question, then, is not "What did I do with all my years?" but "How many of my present moments did I actually enter?" Most of them were not lost. They were **never entered**. The crossing was available. The curve passed through the center. But the person was elsewhere—stretched along the lobe of memory or the lobe of anticipation, present in body but absent in the only sense that matters.

Martha, Mary, and the Mode of Presence

The Gospel of Luke (10:38–42) offers the clearest illustration. Martha is not rebuked for *doing*—she is rebuked for *being divided*. "You are anxious and troubled about many things." The anxiety is the tell: Martha's consciousness is not in the present. It is stretched across tasks, outcomes, pressures—distended along the curve. She is inside the lemniscate, but she is not at the crossing point.

Mary, seated at Christ's feet, represents undivided attention—life collected into the present. "Mary has chosen the better part." Not because she chose inactivity over work, but because she chose **presence over dispersion**. A fully present Martha—doing the same tasks but gathered rather than distended—would not be lesser than Mary. The issue was never chores versus contemplation. The issue was fragmentation versus presence.

Similarly, when Christ instructs in the Gospel of Matthew (6:34), "Do not worry about tomorrow," the instruction is not to abolish the future or to cease planning. It is to **refuse to relocate into the future**. Do not live *outside* the present because of what has not yet come. The tomorrow He warns against is not the temporal reference (which is innocent) but the ontological residence (which is a rival to the Now). The "one thing necessary" is dwelling at the intersection—and Christ is present at the intersection without division, fully inhabiting and revealing what the crossing point makes available.

Empty Nets, Broken Moments

In the Gospel of Luke (5:1–11), the disciples fish all night and catch nothing. Then Christ appears, and the nets are filled to breaking. Labor without presence yields emptiness. Encounter yields abundance. The empty nets are not a punishment for bad technique. They are the natural outcome of moments passed without inhabitation—ontologically unfulfilled, not morally bad. The abundance that follows is what happens when the person is finally present where grace acts.

Eternity is not rare because it is scarce. Eternity is rare because it is **missed**. The crossing is always available. Presence is always possible. But attention is rarely gathered. Between what has been and what is anticipated, there exists a narrow, almost imperceptible gap—where life is actually given. Most pass through it without entering.

Salvation as the Recovery of Presence

If the analysis holds, then salvation, in the terms of this framework, is not primarily moral or juridical. It is the recovery of presence—the return to the crossing, the restoration of the capacity to inhabit the given moment fully. This does not reject the moral and juridical dimensions of soteriology. It grounds them. The moral life operates within the upper-left quadrant. But the deeper question is whether the person is present at all—whether they have a self collected enough to exercise conscience, to choose, to turn. Without presence, there is no agent to be saved. The recovery of presence is the precondition for everything else.

The present work does not reject the insights of the patristic tradition but approaches them from within a different existential condition—not the silence of the monastery, but the density of ordinary life. What was once cultivated through withdrawal is here examined within exposure. The topology remains the same. The phenomenology has changed.

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VIII. The Mechanics of Deferral

> *"Oh, God, if I were sure I were to die tonight I would repent at once. It is the commonest prayer in all languages."*
>
> — J. M. Barrie

If the crossing point is always available and presence is always possible, then why do we defer? The answer is not ignorance, and it is not indifference. The answer is that **the Now is too small to hide in**.

The present demands decision. It demands exposure. It demands irreversibility. In the Now, there is no narrative to cushion the self, no delay to soften the choice, no "not yet" to postpone the reckoning. The present is the place where the person must stand as they are—without the cover story of the past or the escape route of the future. The density of the present is unbearable not because it is painful but because it is *real*, and the person has grown accustomed to unreality.

Tomorrow, by contrast, offers space. It offers narrative. It offers delay. In tomorrow, the person can construct a version of themselves that is ready, reformed, resolved—without ever having to be any of those things today. But tomorrow, in this sense, is not a point in time. It is a **limit never reached**. Like a mathematical asymptote, the person approaches indefinitely without arriving. Repentance becomes infinitely near and permanently unrealized. The thinking-being lives in that gap and calls it hope.

Augustine knew this structure from within. His famous prayer—"Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet"—is not a joke and not a confession of weakness. It is the most precise phenomenological description of deferral ever uttered. Augustine *knows*. He sees the truth clearly. And he delays. This is lucid deferral: the person who understands exactly where the crossing point is and chooses, in full awareness, to remain on the periphery for one more season.

Barrie's formulation adds a second register: conditional deferral. "If I were sure I were to die tonight, I would repent at once." The repentance is real—the person means it. But it is conditional on a certainty that will never come. The person bargains with uncertainty, using the unknowability of the future as permission to remain in the future tense. *I would repent if I knew*. But the Now does not offer certainty about what comes next. It offers only itself. And the person who requires certainty before acting has already relocated into the future, where certainty is always one more piece of information away—the asymptotic tomorrow.

The Gospel of Luke (9:59–60) adds a third and more dangerous register: dutiful deferral. A man says to Christ: "Lord, let me *first* go and bury my father." The man does not refuse. He does not deny. He asks for a delay—and the delay is disguised as duty. This is the most insidious form of deferral because the obligation is real. Burying one's father is not sin. It is piety. And yet Christ's response is absolute: "Let the dead bury their dead." The dead who bury the dead are those who live in deferral—those who inhabit the future tense even when performing legitimate acts. The word that betrays the man is not "bury" but "*first*." There is no *first* at the crossing point. There is only *now*.

These are not different people. Augustine, Barrie, and the man on the road describe three levels of the same structure. One defers lucidly; the second defers conditionally; the third defers dutifully. But all three are engaged in the same act: **postponing participation in a truth they already possess**. Deferral does not deny truth. It postpones inhabitation of it. And the postponement is itself a displacement from the crossing point—a step along the curve, into the future tense where the serpent has always operated.

Deferral is not laziness. It is escape from the density of the present. The Now is too small to hide in, and the person who is not yet ready to be exposed will always find a reason to remain on the curve. Not because the crossing point is inaccessible, but because it is *too accessible*. It asks for nothing but presence, and presence is the one thing the displaced person has never learned to give.

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IX. The Ghost Zone

The Ghost Zone is not a metaphor. It is a real condition—vivid, observable, empirically grounded. What follows is its essential form within the topology of presence.

The Ghost Zone is a state of existential displacement that occurs when a person is physically present but mentally and spiritually inhabits a fabricated, parallel topology. The person oscillates between two planes in the left column of the diagram: the upper-left quadrant (routinary life, work, family) and the lower-left quadrant (the gravitational field of evil). The person displaces to the upper-left for functional existence, but the thinking-being pulls with gravity downward into the lower-left. This oscillation is the Ghost Zone's signature movement. The person cannot, by himself or herself alone, escape this condition. This is not a failure of willpower. It is a topological impossibility: you cannot pull yourself back to the crossing point from a plane that has no path to the center.

The Ghost Zone has a root, and the root is absence—specifically, the absence of presence during the formative years of a person's life. Not necessarily physical absence. The parent may have been in the room, in the house, at the table. But they were not *there*. They were not present at the crossing point. They did not model what it means to inhabit the Now. And because no one was there at the center, the child never learned that the center exists. What the child does instead is build: a compensatory interior architecture—a parallel universe, elaborated over years, in which an alternative life can be inhabited. This is not imagination in the healthy sense. It is the construction of an alternative topology—a space where the person can exist without the unbearable experience of being present in a world that has no presence to offer them. Over time, the compensatory architecture becomes the person's primary habitation. The person no longer visits the Ghost Zone. They *live* there. And because the Ghost Zone was built as a substitute for the crossing point

that was never modeled, the person has no experiential memory of what it means to be present. They do not know what they are missing, because they never had it.

The serpent promised: "Your eyes will be opened." And in the Ghost Zone, the eyes *are* open. But the person does not see more clearly. They see *more flatly*. The moral landscape has lost its elevation, its depth, its gradient. Good and evil are not confused—they are **flattened**. The person does not mistake evil for good. They lose the capacity to experience the difference as meaningful. This is the inverse of the serpent's promise: not blindness, but a kind of sight that cannot perceive dimension. The person inside the curve—even in the lower-left quadrant, under gravitational pull—retains moral depth. They may choose evil, but they choose it *knowing* what it is. The person in the Ghost Zone has lost that depth. Their perception is neither horizontal (between options) nor vertical (between higher and lower) but **flat**—a single undifferentiated plane in which all choices carry equal weight and the very concept of "better" or "worse" has ceased to function. This is not ignorance. The flattening is not intellectual but ontological. A person can hold the correct moral propositions and still be unable to experience them as having weight. The Ghost Zone is the condition in which knowledge is present but presence is absent—and without presence, knowledge has no traction.

And yet the crossing point remains ontologically real. The person in the Ghost Zone cannot reach it alone. But it has not been destroyed. It has not been withdrawn. The topology holds even when the person cannot inhabit it. This is why the Gospel pattern matters: the displaced person was always brought to Christ or encountered by Him. The way back is not self-extraction. It is encounter—initiated from outside the person's current topology, by a presence that the Ghost Zone cannot fabricate and cannot simulate.

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X. Legion: The Theological Symbol of the Ghost Zone

"My name is Legion, for we are many."

— Mark 5:9

I use the biblical figure of Legion—the Gerasene demoniac—as the ultimate psychological and theological symbol for the Ghost Zone. Legion is the antithesis of the singular, integrated human self that exists at the crossing point of time.

Fragmentation versus Integration

When asked for a name, the possessed man replies: "My name is Legion, for we are many." The Ghost Zone shatters the human identity into fragments. Instead of a single soul occupying the Now, the person becomes a collection of uncoordinated impulses, personas, and distractions. You are no longer one. You are many.

Displacement to the Tombs

In Scripture, Legion lives among the tombs—a place of the dead, separated from the living community. This is the displacement of the Ghost Zone. When we are lost in dissociation—technological, ideological, or otherwise—we are like the man in the tombs: physically present in the world but spiritually residing in a space where real life and grace cannot reach us.

The Self-Cutting of the Attention Economy

The biblical Legion is described as "crying out and cutting himself with stones." I see this as a figure for the psychological self-harm of the modern age—the constant anxiety, the internal friction caused by being pulled away from the real topology of time. The Ghost Zone is a state of perpetual agitation where the soul wounds itself because it cannot find the center of the lemniscate.

Exorcism as Topological Realignment

When Christ heals the man, he is found "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind." Singular. Present. Integrated. *Inside the curve again.* The healing is not persuasion. It is topological realignment—a restoration to the crossing point. And note the Gospel pattern: the person did not come to Jesus on his own. The person was displaced. Either the person was brought to Jesus or Jesus came across him. And Jesus never, according to the Gospels, addressed the person directly, but the being or beings inside or surrounding the person. The encounter is always initiated from outside the person's current topology.

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XI. Eden, the Fall, and the Ontological Weaponization of Tense

If Eden represents the Eternal Present, and Adam did not know about good and evil but simply *was*, then it is outside Eden—in the temporal succession, in the Fall—where good and evil can be differentiated. The serpent told the first parents: "You will be like God; you will know about good and evil." The promise was future tense. The fulfillment was exile from the present.

The knowledge of good and evil is not itself evil. It is the condition of moral life inside the curve—the upper-left quadrant, where conscience operates and repentance is possible. But the serpent's trick was to present this knowledge as a promotion (*you will be like God*) rather than what it was: a consequence of displacement from the Eternal Present. Adam did not gain something. He lost the condition in which gaining and losing had no meaning—the condition of simply being.

This is why the grammar matters. The serpent's "you will be" is not merely a false promise. It is an ontological weapon. It converts the person's orientation from the present (where God is, where being is) to the future (where being is speculative,

where the self projects into a void). Every "you will be" is a small exile from the *I am*.

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XII. Interlocutors: What Was Touched but Not Named

The core insights of this essay are not foreign to the tradition. They have been touched—often with extraordinary precision—by thinkers who did not use this language but were reaching toward the same structure. It is worth naming them, not to claim their authority, but to show that what this framework makes explicit has long been recognized, if not yet given a unified topological form.

Augustine of Hippo described the soul as "distended" across time—*distentio animi*—stretched between memory and expectation, unable to gather itself into the present. The lemniscate gives this distention a geometry. The curve is the distention; the crossing point is the gathering. What Augustine diagnosed as a condition of the fallen soul, this framework maps as a topological position: the person stretched along the lobe rather than inhabiting the center.

Maximus the Confessor articulated the fragmentation of the human person after the Fall—the division between mind and body, between will and desire, between the person and God. His vision of salvation was the reunification of these divisions in Christ. The Ghost Zone, in the terms of this essay, is precisely that fragmentation taken to its extreme: the person who is no longer one but many, no longer integrated but scattered. And the exorcism—the topological realignment—is the Maximian reunification: the person found "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind."

These thinkers—Augustine and Maximus—were touching the same structure. They described distention, intrusive thought, and fragmentation. What this framework

makes explicit is the single topological image that holds all three together and shows their relationship to the crossing point.

The Heidegger Turn

A further interlocutor must be named, from outside the theological tradition. Martin Heidegger argued that time gains its meaning from its end—that it is the awareness of finitude, of *Being-toward-death*, that gives temporal existence its urgency, its weight, its structure. For Heidegger, the horizon of time is death, and authentic existence is the existence that faces this horizon without flinching.

This framework proposes something fundamentally different. **Time gains its meaning not from its end but from its ground.** Not from the horizon but from the center. Not from death but from presence—and ultimately from God, who is the ground of presence. Heidegger's temporality is horizon-based: it radiates outward from the self toward the limit. The lemniscate's temporality is center-based: it converges inward toward the crossing point where the Eternal Present sustains the Now.

This is not a refutation of Heidegger but a reorientation. Both frameworks recognize that most of human existence is lived inauthentically—in distraction, in deferral, in the avoidance of what is real. But they differ on what the real *is*. For Heidegger, the real is finitude. For this framework, the real is presence—and presence is grounded in the Eternal Present of God, which is not a horizon to be faced but a center to be inhabited.

What this work adds to both traditions—the patristic and the existential—is twofold. First, the **micro-gap where decision lives**: the infinitesimal space between the pull and the response. This is not merely a moment of choice. It is the crossing point contracted to its smallest possible expression—the Now reduced to an instant, but still sufficient for agency, still sufficient for grace. Second, the **inability to remain there**: the empirical observation that even when the crossing point is reached, the person cannot hold it. The gathering scatters. The presence dissipates. The curve resumes. This is not a failure of the topology but its

deepest feature: the crossing point is always available and never permanent, which is why the spiritual life is not a single arrival but a perpetual return.

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XIII. Four Registers of Convergence

The entire architecture converges across four registers, each independently confirming the same topology:

The grammatical register. God speaks in present tense: *I am Who I am*. Christ declares: *I am the resurrection and the life*. The serpent speaks in future tense: *You will be like God*. Displacement from the Now is encoded in the language itself.

The sacramental register. In the state of grace, God cannot be expelled from the crossing point. The person must choose to leave. Evil's strategy is enticement, not invasion. The parasitic loops do not storm the center; they lure the person toward the periphery, into the territory between remorse and anxiety.

The phenomenological register. Thoughts are involuntary, unavoidable, but not determinative. The Ghost Zone begins when the person starts living at the exits rather than on the road. The oscillation between the upper-left and lower-left quadrants is the lived experience of displacement.

The existential register. Presence is rare not because the crossing point is scarce but because it is missed. Martha is distended; Mary is gathered. The empty nets are moments without inhabitation; the miraculous catch is what happens when the person is finally present. Deferral—whether lucid, as in Augustine, conditional, as in Barrie, or dutiful, as in the man who asked to bury his father first—is escape from the density of the Now. We do not run out of time. We run out of presence.

These four registers are not four separate arguments. They are four ways of seeing the same topological reality. The diagram holds them all.

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XIV. The Diagram

The four-quadrant diagram mapped onto the lemniscate is an attempt to render in a single topological image what the tradition has articulated in distinct forms. Thinkers such as Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas gave precise accounts of the eternal present, the *privatio boni*, the *distentio animi*, the nature of the damned, and the grammar of the divine name. These insights are not absent; they are distributed.

What this framework proposes is not a new set of concepts, but a way of holding them together within a common structure. The topology provides a single figure in which these elements can be seen in relation to one another—spatially ordered around the crossing point—so that each plane is understood not in isolation, but through its position within the whole.

The lemniscate provides this. Its crossing point is the Now—the site of grace, freedom, and encounter. Its left lobe is temporal life, where conscience operates and repentance is possible. Its right lobe, dashed, is the Eternal Present that sustains the center from outside. Below the horizontal axis, evil persists: on the left, as the visible but impermanent parasitism of human wickedness, where the person still knows good from evil and can still turn; on the right, as the eternal non-existence of hell—real, terrible, a mode of being that is the negation of being, where the damned are never dead but eternally dying, sustained by a God they can no longer receive as life.

And the Ghost Zone person oscillates in the left column, between routine and gravity, pulled by past and future as ontological residences, lured away from a center that evil cannot approach but the person can always leave.

The deferral of presence—whether through Augustine's "not yet," Barrie's conditional repentance, or the dutiful "let me first" of the man on the road—is always, at its root, the same movement: escape from the density of the Now into the false spaciousness of a fabricated tense.

The way back is not self-extraction. It never has been. In the Gospels, the displaced person was always brought to Christ or encountered by Him. The exorcism is topological realignment: the restoration of the singular self to the crossing point of real time, where the person is found "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind."

Present tense. *I am*. The only tense in which God dwells, in which grace operates, in which the person is real. The only moment that is complete in itself—not waiting, not becoming, but gathered, undivided, alive.

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